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MR. WINTHIROP'S ORATION

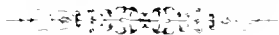
AT THE

INAUGURATION

OF THE

STATUE OF FRANKLIN,

SEPTEMBER 17, 1856.





ORATION

AT

THE INAUGURATION

OF THE

STATUE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,

IN HIS NATIVE CITY

SEPT. 17, 1856.

BY

HON. ROBERT C. WINTHROP.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 12 CONGRESS STREET.

1856.

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## O R A T I O N .

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WE are assembled, Mr. Mayor and Fellow Citizens, to do honor to the memory of one, of whom it is little to say, that from the moment at which Boston first found a local habitation and a name on this Hemisphere—just two hundred and twenty-six years ago to-day—down even to the present hour of her mature development and her meridian glory, she has given birth to no man of equal ability, of equal celebrity, or of equal claim upon the grateful remembrance and commemoration of his fellow-countrymen and of mankind.

We come, on this birth-day of our ancient Metropolis, to decorate her municipal grounds with the image of that one of her native sons, whose name has shed the greatest lustre upon her history :—proposing it as the appropriate frontispiece and figure-head, if I may so speak, of her Executive and Legislative Halls forever.

We come, at this high noon of a new and noble exhibition of the products of New England industry and invention, to inaugurate a work of Art, in which the latest and best efforts of American genius and American skill are fitly and most felicitously embodied in the form and lineaments of the greatest American Mechanic and Philosopher.

We come, on this anniversary of the very day on which the Constitution of the United States was adopted and signed, to commemorate a Statesman and Patriot, who was second to no one of his time in the services which he rendered to the cause of American Liberty and Independence, and whose privilege it was, at the advanced age of eighty years, to give his official sanction and signature to the hallowed Instrument, by which alone that Liberty and Independence could have been organized, administered and perpetuated.

I hail the presence of this vast concourse of the People,—assembled in all the multiplied capacities and relations known to our political or our social state,—Mechanic, Mercantile and Agricultural, Literary, Scientific and Professional, Moral, Charitable and Religious, Civil, Military and Masonic,—not forgetting that “Legion of Honor,” which has decorated itself once more, for this occasion, with the Medals which his considerate bounty provided for the scholastic tri-

umphs of their boyhood, and which are justly prized by every one that wins and wears them, beyond all the insignia which Kings or Emperors could bestow,—I hail the presence of this countless multitude both of Citizens and of Strangers, from which nothing is wanting of dignity or distinction, of brilliancy or of grace, which office, honor, age, youth, beauty could impart,—as the welcome and most impressive evidence, that the day and the occasion are adequately appreciated by all who are privileged to witness them.

“Thus strives a grateful Country to display  
The mighty debt which nothing can repay!”

Our City and its environs have not, indeed, been left until now, Fellow-Citizens, wholly destitute of the decorations of sculpture. WASHINGTON,—first always to be commemorated by every American community,—has long stood majestically within the inner shrine of our State Capitol, chiseled, as you know, by the celebrated Chantrey, from that pure white marble, which is the fittest emblem of the spotless integrity and pre-eminent patriotism of a character, to which the history of mere humanity has hitherto furnished no parallel.

BOWDITCH, our American La Place, has been seen for many years beneath the shades of Mount Auburn, portrayed with that air of profound thought and penetrating observation, which seems almost to give back to the effigy of bronze the power of piercing the skies and measuring the mechanism of the heavens, which only death could take away from the ever-honored original.

Near him, in the beautiful Chapel of the same charming Cemetery, will soon be fitly gathered Representative Men of the four great periods of Massachusetts history:—JOHN WINTHROP, for whom others may find the appropriate epithet and rightful designation, with the First Charter of Massachusetts in his hand;—JAMES OTIS, that “flame of fire” against Writs of Assistance and all the other earliest manifestations of British aggression;—JOHN ADAMS, ready to “sink or swim” in the cause of “Independence now and Independence forever”;—and JOSEPH STORY, interpreting and administering, with mingled energy and sweetness, the Constitutional and Judicial system of our mature existence. Glorious Quaternion, illustrating and personifying a more glorious career! God grant that there may never be wanting a worthy successor to this brilliant series, and that the line of the great and good may be as unbroken in the future, as it has been in the past history of our beloved Commonwealth!

— *Primo avulso non deficit alter*  
Aureus.

Within the last year, also, the generosity and the genius of our city and country have been nobly combined, in adorning our spacious and admirable Music-Hall with a grand embodiment of that exqui-

site Composer, who would almost seem to have been rendered deaf to the noises of earth, that he might catch the very music of the spheres, and transfer it to the score of his magnificent symphonies.

Nor do we forget, on this occasion, that the familiar and cherished presence of the greatest of the adopted sons of Massachusetts, is soon to greet us again on the Exchange, gladdening the sight of all who congregate there with the incomparable front of DANIEL WEBSTER.

At the touch of native art, too, the youthful form of the martyred WARREN is even now breaking forth from the votive block, to remind us afresh "how good and glorious it is to die for one's country."

But for BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, the greatest of our native-born sons, and peculiarly the man of the People, has been reserved the eminently appropriate distinction of forming the subject of the first Bronze, open-air, Statue, erected within the limits of the old peninsula of his birth, to ornament one of its most central thoroughfares, and to receive, and I had almost said to reciprocate, the daily salutations of all who pass through them.

Nor can any one fail to recognize, I think, a peculiar fitness in the place which has been selected for this Statue.

Go back with me, Fellow-Citizens, for a moment, to a period just one hundred and forty-two years ago, and let us picture to ourselves the very spot on which we are assembled, as it was in that olden time. Boston was then a little town, of hardly more than ten or twelve thousand inhabitants. Her Three Hills, now scarcely distinguishable, were then her most conspicuous and characteristic feature, and I need hardly say that almost all the material objects which met the view of a Bostonian in this vicinity, at that day, must have been widely different from those which we are now privileged to look upon. No stately structures for City Councils or for Courts of Justice were then standing upon this site. There was no Horticultural Hall in front, delighting the eye and making the mouth water with the exquisite flowers and luscious fruits of neighboring gardens and green-houses. There were no shops and stores, filled with the countless fabrics of foreign and domestic labor, facing and flanking it on every side. Yet all was not different. The fathers and founders of Boston and of Massachusetts,—more than one, certainly, of the earliest ministers and earliest magistrates of the grand old Puritan Colony,—were slumbering then as they are slumbering now, in their unadorned and humble graves at our side, in what was then little more than a village church-yard,—

"Each in his narrow cell forever laid ;"—

and yonder House of God, of about half its present proportions, was already casting its consecrated shadows over the mouldering turf which covered them. At the lower end of the sacred edifice, for the

enlargement of which it was finally removed about the year 1748, there might have been seen a plain wooden building of a story and a half in height, in which EZEKIEL CHEEVER of immortal memory,—“the ancient and honorable Master of the Free School in Boston,”—had exercised his magisterial functions for more than five-and-thirty years. He, too, at the date of which I am speaking, was freshly resting from his labors, having died, at the age of ninety-four, about six years previously, and having fully justified the quaint remark of Cotton Mather, that he “left off teaching only when mortality took him off.” But the homely old School-house was still here, under the charge of one Mr. Nathaniel Williams, and among the younger boys who were daily seen bounding forth from its irksome confinement at the allotted hour, to play on the very Green on which we are now gathered, was *one*, who probably as little dreamed that he should ever be the subject of a commemoration or a statue, as the humblest of those five-and-twenty thousand children who are now receiving their education at the public expense within our city limits, and some of whom are at this moment so charmingly grouped around us!

Descended from a sturdy stock, which an original Tithe-Book,—recently discovered and sent over to his friend Mr. Everett, by one who finds so much delight himself, and furnishes so much delight to all the world, in dealing with the heroes and demigods of humanity, (Thomas Carlyle)—descended from a sturdy stock of blacksmiths, which this curious and precious relic enables us to trace distinctly back to their anvils and their forge-hammers, and to catch a glimpse of “their black knuckles and their hobnailed shoes,” more than two centuries ago, at the little village of Ecton, in Northamptonshire, Old England,—born, himself, near the corner of our own Milk Street, only eight years before the scene I have just described, and baptized, with most significant punctuality, on the same day, in the Old South Meeting House,—he was now, indeed, a bright, precocious youth, who could never remember a time when he could not read, and his pious father and mother were already cherishing a purpose “to devote him to the service of the Church, as the tythe of their sons.” So he had been sent to the Public Grammar School, (for Boston afforded but one, I believe, at that precise moment,) to get his education;—but he continued there rather less than a single year, notwithstanding that “in that time (to use his own words) he had risen gradually from the middle of the class of that year to be at the head of the same class, and was removed into the next class, whence he was to be placed in the third at the end of the year.” He was evidently a *fast* boy,—in more senses of the word than one, perhaps,—and his progress was quite too rapid for his father’s purse, who could not contemplate the expense of giving him a College education. Accordingly, “he was taken away from the Grammar



school, and sent to a school for writing and arithmetic kept by a then famous man, Mr. George Brownwell, where he learned to write a good hand pretty soon, but failed entirely in arithmetic."

And thus the little fellow disappeared from the play-ground on which we are now standing, and presently from all the opportunities of education which his native place supplied. Not long afterwards we trace him helping his father at soap-boiling and tallow-chandling at the sign of the Blue Ball, (now the Golden Ball,) at the corner of Union and Hanover Streets. Next we find him working his brother's printing press in Queen Street, now Court Street, and diversifying his labors as an apprentice with the most diligent and devoted efforts to increase his information and improve his mind. Now and then we detect him writing a ballad,—“a Light House Tragedy,” or “a Song about Blackbeard, the pirate,”—and hawking it through the streets, by way of pastime or to turn a penny. Now and then we discover him trying his pen most successfully at an anonymous article for his brother's Newspaper. Presently we see him, for a short time, at little more than sixteen years of age, the ostensible and responsible Editor of that Paper, and in the New England Courant, printed and sold in Queen Street, Boston, on the 11th day of February, 1723, the name of BENJAMIN FRANKLIN takes its place in fair, round capitals,—never again to be undistinguished while he lived, nor ever to be unremembered in the history of New England or of the world.

But circumstances in his domestic condition proved unpropitious to the further development of his destiny at home. His spirit was winged for a wider and bolder flight than discreet and prudent parents would be likely to encourage or to sanction. It was, certainly, altogether too soaring to be longer hampered by fraternal leading-strings, and it was soon found chafing at the wires of the domestic cage. Disgusted at last with the impediments which were thrown in his way, and yearning for an assertion of his personal independence, he slips the noose which binds him to his birth-place, and is suddenly found seeking his fortunes, under every discouragement, three or four hundred miles away from home or kindred or acquaintance. A lad of only seventeen, Franklin has disappeared not only from the old School House Green, but from Boston altogether.—But not forever. He has carried with him a native energy, integrity, perseverance and self-reliance, which nothing could subdue or permanently repress. He has carried with him a double measure of the gristle and the grit which are the best ingredient and most productive yield of the ice and granite of New England. And now, Fellow-Citizens, commences a career, which for its varied and almost romantic incidents, for its uniform and brilliant success, and for its eminent public usefulness, can hardly be paralleled in the history of the human race. This is not the occasion for doing full justice to

such a career. Even the barest and briefest allusion to the posts which were successively held, and the services to his country and to mankind which were successively rendered, by the GREAT BOSTONIAN, would require far more time than can be appropriately consumed in these inaugural exercises. The most rapid outline is all I dare attempt.

The Life of Franklin presents him in four several and separate relations to society, in each one of which he did enough to have filled up the full measure of a more than ordinary life, and to have secured for himself an imperishable renown with posterity. As we run over that life ever so cursorily, we see him first as a MECHANIC, and the son of a Mechanic, aiding his father for a year or two in his humble toil, and then taking upon himself, as by a Providential instinct, that profession of a PRINTER, in which he delighted to class himself to the latest hour of his life. You all remember, I doubt not, that when in the year 1788, at the age of eighty-two years, he made that last Will and Testament, which Boston apprentices and Boston school-boys will never forget, nor ever remember without gratitude, he commenced it thus:—"I, Benjamin Franklin, of Philadelphia, PRINTER, late Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States of America to the Court of France, now President of the State of Pennsylvania, do make and declare my last Will and Testament as follows." Before all other titles he placed that of his chosen craft, and deemed no designation of himself complete, in which that was not foremost. In the midst of his highest distinctions, and while associated with statesmen and courtiers at home or abroad, he was proud to be found turning aside to talk, not merely with the Baskervilles and Strahans who were so long his chosen friends, but with the humbler laborers at the press—"entering into their schemes, and suggesting or aiding improvements in their art." In the last year but one of his life, he writes to his sister—"I am too old to follow printing again myself, but loving the business, I have brought up my grandson Benjamin to it, and have built and furnished a printing-house for him, which he now manages under my own eye." He had an early and intense perception of the dignity and importance of that great engine for informing and influencing the public opinion of the world, and a prophetic foresight of the vast and varied power which a Free Press was to exert, for good or for evil, in his own land,—and he seemed peculiarly anxious that his personal relations to it should never be forgotten.

And they never will be forgotten. If Franklin had never been any thing else than a printer, if he had rendered no services to his country or to mankind but those which may fairly be classed under this department of his career, he would still have left a mark upon his age which could not have been mistaken or overlooked. It was as

*a printer* that he set such an example to his fellow-mechanics of all ages, of industry, temperance, and frugality,—of truth, sincerity, and integrity. “The industry of that Franklin,” said an eye-witness of his early habits, (Dr. Baird,) “is superior to anything I ever saw of the kind; I see him still at work when I go home from Club, and he is at work again before his neighbors are out of bed.” And you all remember how the ale-drinking apprentices of London sneered at him as “the Water-American,” and wondered how one who drank no *strong* beer, could be so much *stronger* than themselves! It was as *a printer*, that he instituted those Clubs for discussion and mutual improvement, which elevated the character and importance of the working classes wherever they were introduced. It was as *a printer*, that he displayed such extraordinary mechanical ingenuity, in making for himself whatever articles he needed in his own profession, founding letters of lead, carving ornaments and cuts of wood, engraving vignettes upon copper, mixing his own printer’s ink, and manufacturing his own plate press. It was as *a printer*, that he set on foot the first Subscription Circulating Library, “the mother of all in North America.” It was as *a printer*, that he did so much to improve the character of the Newspaper Press of the American Colonies, asserting its liberty, discouraging its licentiousness, protesting against its being employed as an instrument of scandal, defamation and detraction, and exhibiting it as the worthy and chosen vehicle of information, entertainment and instruction. It was as *a printer*, that he commenced and continued that series of delightful Essays, sometimes political, sometimes historical, sometimes moral, sometimes satirical or playful, which are hardly inferior in wit and wisdom to the best papers of Johnson or of Addison, of the witty Dean of St. Patrick’s or the genial Canon of St. Paul’s,—and which would have secured and established the permanent literary reputation of their author, had no other monument of his labors existed. It was as *a printer*, above all, that he prepared and published for so many years his immortal Almanac, under the name of Richard Saunders, with those inimitable proverbs, only second to those of Solomon, of which so many millions of copies, in almost every language and tongue known beneath the sun, have been scattered broadcast throughout the world, for the entertainment and instruction of young and old, rich and poor, wise and simple. When will ever Poor Richard be forgotten! Or when will he ever be remembered without fresh admiration for the shrewd, sagacious common sense, which he poured forth with such charming good humor and in such exhaustless profusion!

Well may the Mechanics of Boston take the lead in every commemoration of Benjamin Franklin,—as they have done in that of which this day witnesses the completion,—for it was as a Boston Mechanic

that he laid the foundations, strong and deep, of a character which no temptations or trials could ever shake, and of a fame which will know no limits but those of civilization, and no termination but that of time !

But the ingenuity and invention of Franklin, while they stooped to supply not merely every want which he encountered in his own profession, but every want which he observed in his relations with others, could not be confined within any mere mechanical limits, but demanded nothing less than the whole circle of art and nature for their display. If nothing was too low for his care, neither was anything too lofty for his contemplation ; and as we run over his life he stands before us in the character of a PHILOSOPHER, not less distinctly or less proudly than we have just seen him in the character of a Printer.

It is with no little interest that we recall his own statement, that it was in his native Boston that his curiosity was first excited in regard to the nature of that wonderful element, from the investigation of which he was destined to derive his highest and most pervading celebrity. Here, in the year 1746, he received the earliest impressions upon the subject of electricity, and here, among the Bowdoins and Chauncys and Coopers and Quineys and Winthrops of that day, he found some of the earliest and latest sympathizers and co-operators in his scientific as well as political pursuits. The gradual steps by which he advanced in his electrical researches are for the historian and biographer ; the transcendent result is familiar to you all. When Franklin had completed that grand and unparalleled discovery,—arresting the very thunder-bolts on their flaming circuit through the sky, challenging them forth from their chariots of fire, and compelling them to a reluctant revelation of the nature of their mysterious, mighty energies,—he had reached a pinnacle of human glory which had not been approached by any man of his country or of his age. His fame was flashed from pole to pole over the whole habitable globe, and hardly a civilized region, over which a thunder-cloud ever pealed or rattled, was long left ignorant of the name of him, who had disarmed it of its shafts and stripped it of its terrors.

The boldness and sublimity of the experiment, by which his theories were finally tested and confirmed, have never been surpassed, if they have ever been equalled, in the walks of science, and even the battle-fields of ancient or modern history may be explored in vain for a loftier exhibition of moral and physical heroism.

See him going forth into the fields, with no attendant or witness but his own son, lest a failure should bring discredit,—not upon himself, for no man cared less for anything which might concern himself,—but upon the experiment he was about to try, and upon the theory which he knew must prove true in the end. See him calmly awaiting the gathering of the coming storm, and then lift-

ing his little kite, with an iron point at the top of the stick and a steel key at the end of the hempen string, to draw deliberately down upon his own head a full charge of the Artillery of Heaven! See him, disappointed at first, but never despairing or doubting, applying his own knuckle to the key,—knocking, as it were, at the very gates of the mighty Thunderer,—and eagerly standing to receive that bolt, from which so many of us, even now that he has provided so complete a shield, shrink away so often in terror! A similar experiment is to cost the life of a distinguished Russian philosopher at St. Petersburg only a few months afterwards. Shall Franklin's life be spared now? Well has Mr. Everett suggested, in the words of another, that if that moment had been his last, “conscious of an immortal name, he must have felt that he could have been content.” But the good providence of God, in which, as we shall see, Franklin always trusted, permitted the cloud to emit but a single spark. That spark was enough. His theory is confirmed and verified. Henceforth, in the latest words of the dying Arago, Electricity is Franklin's. “To him the world owes the knowledge which led to the Telegraph, the Electroplate, the Electrotape. Every fresh adaptation of electricity is a stone added to his monument. They are only improvements of his bequest. Electricity is Franklin's.” His name has, indeed, become immortal, but, thanks be to God, his life is still preserved for the best interests of his Country and for the welfare of the world.

But the fame of Franklin as a philosopher rests not alone on his discoveries in any single department of natural history, and the brilliancy of his electrical experiments must not be permitted to eclipse his many other services to science. Nothing, indeed, within the range of philosophical inquiry, seemed to be beyond his eager and comprehensive grasp, and to the end of his long life he was yearly adding something to the stock of scientific knowledge. He delighted to employ himself in searching out the causes of the common operations of nature, as well as of its more striking and remarkable phenomena. The principles of evaporation, the origin of the saltiness of the sea and the formation of salt mines, the habitual commencement of North-Easterly storms at the South-East, the influence of oil in smoothing the waters and stilling the waves, and a hundred other subjects, at that time by no means familiar to the common understanding, were elaborately investigated and explained by him. Indeed, wherever he went, he was sure to find material for his inquisitive and penetrating mind. A badly heated room would furnish him with a motive for inventing a better stove, and a smoking chimney would give him no rest until he had studied the art of curing it. Did he visit Holland,—he is found learning from the boatmen that vessels propelled by an

equal force move more slowly in shoal than in deep water, and forthwith he engages in patient experiments to verify and illustrate the lesson, for the benefit of those who may be employed in constructing Canals. Did the bark in which he was crossing the ocean stop a day or two at Madeira,—he seizes the occasion to procure and write out a full account of its soil, climate, population and productions. And while the ship is in full sail, behold him from day to day the laughing-stock of the sailors, who probably regarded him as only a whimsical landlubber, while he sits upon the deck dipping his thermometer into successive tubs of water bailed out for the purpose, to ascertain by the differences of temperature the range and extent of the Gulf Stream,—and thus furnishing the basis of that Geography of the Seas, which has recently assumed so imposing a shape under the hands of the accomplished and enterprising Maury.

No wonder that the great English historian of that period, the philosophic Hume, wrote to Franklin as he was leaving England to return home in 1762: “I am sorry that you intend soon to leave our hemisphere. America has sent us many good things, gold, silver, sugar, tobacco, indigo, &c.: but you are the first philosopher, and indeed the first great man of letters for whom we are beholden to her.” And most justly did Sir Humphrey Davy say of him at a later day—“He has in no instance exhibited that false dignity, by which philosophy is kept aloof from common applications; and he has sought rather to make her a useful inmate and servant in the common habitations of man, than to preserve her merely as an object of admiration in temples and palaces.” Indeed, his merits as a philosopher were early and every where recognized and acknowledged, and our BOSTON PRINTER was introduced and welcomed into Royal Societies, and Imperial Academies and Institutes, in almost every kingdom on the globe.

Nor were his scientific attainments recognized only by diplomas and titular distinctions. It is pleasant to remember that the great British Powder Magazines at Purfleet, and the magnificent Cathedral of St. Paul's, were both protected from the danger of lightning by rods arranged under Franklin's immediate direction; while some years later, (1784,) the King of France placed him at the head of a commission of nine members of the Royal Academy and Faculty of Medicine, to investigate the subject of Animal Magnetism, then first introduced to the notice of the world by the celebrated Mesmer.

In running over the marvelous career of Benjamin Franklin, we hail him next, in the third place, as a STATESMAN and PATRIOT, second to no one of his time in the variety and success of his efforts to build up the institutions of our country, both state and national, and in promoting and establishing her Union and her Independence.

Franklin made his first formal appearance on the political stage, at the age of thirty years, in the humble capacity of Clerk of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia, in the year 1736. But his thoughts being now turned to public affairs, he at once commenced instituting reforms, wherever an opportunity presented itself. Nothing which could contribute to the welfare of the community in which he lived, was too seemingly insignificant for his attention. The regulation of the City Watch, the paving and sweeping and lighting of the Streets, the organization of Fire Companies, the foundation of Schools and Academies, successively occupied his earliest care. His fitness for every sort of public employment soon becoming manifest, he was spared from no service within the gift either of the Executive or of the People. In the single year 1750, while he was just commencing his philosophical pursuits, he was called upon to discharge the duties of a Justice of the Peace, (no sinecure in that day,) by the Governor; of a Common Councilman, and then an Alderman, by the Corporation of Philadelphia; and of a Burgess, to represent them in the State Assembly, by his fellow-citizens at large. The next year finds him delegated as a Commissioner to treat with the Indians. The next year, he is appointed joint Post Master General of the Colonies. The following year,—the ever memorable year of 1754,—he is one of a Congress of Commissioners from all the colonies at Albany, to confer with the Chiefs of the Six Nations concerning the means of defending the country from a threatened invasion by France. And then and there, in that capacity, our Boston printer first projected and proposed a *Union* of all the colonies under one government,—the original suggestion of that glorious *Union* which was afterwards adopted as a defence against the tyrannical oppression of Great Britain, and which is still our best and only defence, not only against Great Britain and all the rest of the world, but against each other, and against ourselves, too. God grant that this Union may be no less durable than the solid bronze of which the Statue of its earliest proposer and constant advocate is composed,—defying alike the corrosions of time, the shock of strife, and the convulsions of every evil element!

The next year, 1755, we see him procuring wagons for General Braddock, who had utterly failed to procure them by any other agency, and advancing for the service upwards of a thousand pounds sterling out of his own pocket. And then, too, it was, that with a sagacity so remarkable, he distinctly predicted the precise ambuscade which resulted in the disastrous defeat of that ill-starred expedition. Before the close of the same year, we find him marching himself, at the head of a body of troops, to protect the frontier,—not waiting, I presume, to be formally commissioned as Commander, since it is not until the succeeding year, 1756,—just one hundred years ago,—that we see him

regularly sworn in as Colonel, and learn that several glasses of his electrical apparatus were shaken, down and broken, by the volleys fired under his windows, as a salute after the first review of his Regiment.

Passing over the six or seven next years, which belong to another department of his career, we find him in 1763, sole Postmaster General of British North America, and spending five or six months in traveling through the Northern Colonies in an old-fashioned gig, for the purpose of inspecting and arranging the Post Offices. Soon afterwards we see him taking a leading part in stopping the tide of insurrection and quieting the commotions arising out of the inhuman massacre of the Indians in Lancaster County,—appealing to the people in an eloquent and masterly pamphlet, organizing a Military Association, and by his personal exertions and influence strengthening the arm of Government and upholding the supremacy of the Laws. And now, in 1764, we welcome him, assuming the chair as Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly, to sign a bold Petition to the King against the Proprietary Government which he had drafted and defended on the floor, but to which the previous Speaker had shrunk from affixing his signature.

Passing over another interval of a little more than ten years, (to be the subject of separate allusion under another view of his services,) we meet him next, on his own soil, in 1775, as a Delegate from Pennsylvania to the Second Continental Congress. He serves simultaneously as chairman of the Committee of Safety appointed by the Pennsylvania Assembly. “In the morning at 6 o’clock, (says he of this period, and he was then sixty-nine years of age,) I am at the Committee of Safety, which Committee holds till near 9, when I am at Congress, and that sits till after 4 in the afternoon.” In the Continental Congress, we find him successively proposing a plan of Confederation; assuming the entire management of the American Post Office; at the head of the Commissioners for Indian Affairs; a leading member of the Committee of Secret Correspondence, and of almost every other Committee, whether for secret or for open negotiations; a Delegate to the American Camp at Cambridge, to consult with Washington and the Continental Army for the relief of his native town; a Delegate to Canada, to concert measures of sympathy and succor; and finally, one of the illustrious Committee of Five, with Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, and Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston, to draft the Declaration of Independence. That Declaration is reported and adopted, and Franklin signs it in his order with an untrembling hand. He would seem, however, to have fully realized the momentous character of the act, when he humorously replied to our own John Hancock, who had said—‘There must be no pulling different ways, we must all hang together;’ “Yes, we must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all *hang* separately.” He was as ready to brave the strokes of arbitrary Power, as he had been those of the



lightning of Heaven,—to snatch the sceptre from tyrants as the thunder-bolt from the clouds; and he might almost seem to have adopted, as the motto of his life, those noble lines of a cotemporary Poet—

‘Thy spirit, Independence, let me share!  
 Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye,  
 Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,  
 Nor heed the storm which howls along the sky!’

And now he presides over the Convention which frames the Constitution of Pennsylvania; and, after another interval of about eight years and a half, (to be accounted for presently,) we see him presiding over the State itself, whose Constitution he had thus aided in forming. Now, too, at the age of eighty, the Nestor of America, as he was well styled by the National Assembly of France, he is found among the Delegates to the Convention which framed the Constitution of the United States, and there we may hear him making two brief but most characteristic and remarkable speeches. One of them I reserve for the conclusion of this Address. The other was delivered on the 28th day of June, 1787, when he submitted that memorable motion,—seconded by Roger Sherman, and said by at least one member of the Convention to have been rejected only because they had no *funds* for meeting the expense, but which, at any rate, found only three or four voices to sustain it, — that “henceforth Prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business.”

“I have lived, Sir, (said he most nobly,) a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—*that God governs in the affairs of men*. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an Empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that ‘except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.’ I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a by-word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest.”

Glorious words! Precious testimony! Admirable example! The wisest and most venerable of all that wise and venerable Assembly, full of the largest and richest and most varied experience; full, too, of the fruits of the most profound scientific and philosophical research,—even he that had ‘divided a way for the lightnings,’ ‘sending them that they might go, and say unto him, Here we are,’—

publicly acknowledging the utter insufficiency of all human wisdom, and calling upon his associates to unite with him in "humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate their understandings!"

Who shall say, that if inequalities, or injustices, or imperfections of any sort, exist in the great work of that Convention, which even now may threaten its overthrow,—which even now may involve us in the danger of being "divided by our little partial local interests" and of encountering the fate of "the builders of Babel,"—who shall say that the adoption of Franklin's Resolution might not have averted such a result? And who shall doubt that, if, in the future administration of that cherished Instrument, all human wisdom shall again be found signally at fault, as it is found at this hour, the humble prostration of a whole people, Governors and governed, in prayer to God, for that most neglected of all subjects of prayer—the preservation of our Country and its Constitution, its Union and its Liberty,—might not be a more effectual safeguard, than all the brawlings and bickerings and wrestlings and wranglings of self-relying and self-magnifying politicians!

We could all have wished, my friends, that Franklin had been a more earnest student of the Gospel of Christ; but the devout reliance upon a superintending Providence, attested by frequent prayer, which characterized him from his youth upwards, and which never failed him in private or in public life,—his intimacy with Whitfield and with the "Good Bishop" of St. Asaph,—his earnest religious advice to his daughter, and his strenuous remonstrance against the infidel publications of Paine,—furnish ample evidence of a reverence for sacred things and solemn observances, which might well put to shame the indifference of not a few of those, who may be most disposed to cavil about his views of Christianity.

But there is another phase to this many-sided and mighty mind, and the Great Bostonian stands before us, in the fourth place, as a DIPLOMATIC AGENT AND AMBASSADOR in Foreign Lands:—a character in which he rendered services of inestimable value to the separate Colonies and to the whole Country, and secured a renown quite independent of that which he had achieved as a Mechanic, a Philosopher, or a Statesman, and by no means inferior to either.

Franklin spent no less than twenty-six years of his mature life in other lands, all but two of them in public employment. He was more than five years in London, between 1757 and 1763, as Agent of Pennsylvania to attend to that Petition to the King, which he had been appointed Speaker to sign. His fame as a Philosopher and a writer had even then preceded him. He had already been made a member of the Royal Society, and had received the Medal of Sir Godfrey Copley. His mission at this time, however, gave but little scope for

brilliant service, though it has been said on good authority that the British Expedition against Canada, with its memorable results in the victory of Wolfe and the conquest of Quebec, may be chiefly ascribed to his earnest recommendation of that particular policy to the British Ministry of that day.

His second and more important visit to London, in a public capacity, extended from the close of the year 1764, to May, 1775. He went at first, as before, only as Agent for Pennsylvania, but soon received commissions as Agent for Georgia, for New Jersey, and for our own Massachusetts Assembly. Arriving at the very era of the Stamp Act, his whole residence in England, of more than ten years, was crowded with incidents of the most interesting and exciting character. If no other memorial existed of Franklin's wisdom, courage and patriotism, than the single record of his extraordinary Examination before the House of Commons, at the beginning of the year 1766, the Statue which we are about to inaugurate would have an ample justification to every American eye, and in every American heart. If any one desires to obtain a vivid impression of the surpassing qualities of this wonderful man,—of his fullness of information, of his firmness of purpose, of his wit, prudence and indomitable presence of mind, of his true dignity and patriotic devotedness of character,—let him read this Examination as contained in his published works. It has often seemed to me incredible that such replies could have been, as we know they were, in so great a degree unpremeditated. There is a dramatic power, a condensed energy, a mingled force and felicity of expression, with an unhesitating mastery of resources, in Franklin's share of this famous Dialogue, which would alone have secured him no second place among the remarkable men of his age. This was the scene of his glory and his pride. But he was no stranger to the other side of the picture. He knew how to be humbled as well as how to be exalted, how to be silent as well as how to answer. And that subsequent scene in the Privy Council Chamber, on the 11th of January, 1774, when he stood as the "butt of invective ribaldry for near an hour," and bore without flinching, in his capacity of Agent of Massachusetts, a treatment so indecent and ignominious, will be remembered by every true-hearted American, to the latest generation, as a triumph no less proud and glorious.

Another year attests the estimation in which he is held by the greatest figure of that memorable period of English history, when the peerless peer—the incomparable Chatham—not only introduced him personally into the House of Lords, to listen to his burning words on a motion to withdraw the Troops from the Town of Boston, but soon afterwards, on being reproached with taking counsel of Franklin, "made no scruple to declare, that if he were the first minister of the

country, and had the care of settling this momentous business, he should not be ashamed of publicly calling to his assistance a person so perfectly acquainted with the whole of American Affairs as the gentleman alluded to, and so injuriously reflected on ;—one, whom all Europe held in high estimation for his knowledge and wisdom, and ranked with our Boyles and Newtons ; who was an honor not to the English nation only, but to human nature.”

But by far the greatest of Franklin’s services in foreign employment remain still to be recounted. It is not too much to say, that the early success of our Revolutionary struggle was mainly attributable to the generous and magnanimous aid afforded us by France. Let us never forget the magnitude of our indebtedness to her for that noble intervention, and let the remembrance of it serve to temper the animosities and soften the asperities which may at any time spring up in our intercourse with her people or her rulers,—inclining us ever to maintain the kindest and most amicable relations with both. But let us never fail to remember that for the French Alliance, with all its advantages and aids, our country was indebted, more than to any or all other causes, to the character, the influence and the efforts of Benjamin Franklin. His celebrity as a philosopher, a man of letters, a statesman, and a bold defender of his country’s rights and liberties, prepared the way for him. The intelligence, information and lofty independence he had displayed during his recent Examination before the British Commons, and the unflinching firmness with which he had borne the abuse which had been heaped upon him at the Bar of the British Council, had excited the warmest admiration and sympathy on the other side of the Channel. Everything in his age, appearance and reputation conspired to render him an object of interest, attention and enthusiastic regard. It might be said of his arrival at Paris, as Cicero said of the arrival of Archias at some of the cities of ancient Greece, “*Sic ejus adventus celebrabatur, ut fumam ingenii expectatio hominis, expectationem ipsius adventus admirationque superaret.*”

Nothing could be more striking than the account which an eminent French Historian has given of this advent :—“By the effect which Franklin produced in France, we might say that he fulfilled his mission, not with a Court, but with a free people. \* \* Men imagined they saw in him a Sage of antiquity come back to give austere lessons and generous examples to the moderns. They personified in him the Republic of which he was the Representative and the Legislator. \* \* His virtues and his renown negotiated for him ; and before the second year of his mission had expired, no one conceived it possible to refuse fleets and an army to the compatriots of Franklin.”

Undoubtedly at that era, and in that Capital, Franklin was the great American name. The mild but steady lustre of Washington’s

surpassing character had not yet broken forth full-orbed on the admiration of the European world, as it was destined to do no long time afterwards. With that character at this day we admit no comparison. But our Boston printer was the very first of whom it might then have been said, in language since applied to others, that his name alone made our country respectable throughout the world; and when he signed that Treaty of Alliance with France, on the 6th of February, 1778, he had accomplished a work which will ever entitle him to be counted as the Negotiator of the most important, as well as of the very first, Treaty to which this country has ever been a party. This Treaty of Alliance was, indeed, the immediate and most effective instrument of that other and still more memorable Treaty, which he was privileged also to sign at Paris, four or five years afterwards, in company with his illustrious associates, JOHN ADAMS and JOHN JAY,—the Treaty of Peace and Independence with Great Britain, by which the War of Revolution was at length happily and gloriously terminated, and by which the United States of America were at last admitted to an equal place in the great brotherhood of Nations.

Many more Treaties received his attention and his signature, with those of his illustrious associates, during the same period;—one of amity and commerce with France, one with Sweden, and one with Prussia, in which latter he succeeded in procuring admission for that noble stipulation against privateering,—which, whether it be expedient or inexpedient for the particular circumstances of our country at the present moment, must commend itself as a matter of principle and justice to the whole Christian world. The late Congress of Peace at Paris has substantially revived and adopted this article on the very spot on which it was drafted and defended by Franklin eighty years ago,—uniting it, too, with that great American doctrine, that free ships shall make free goods, which found in Franklin, on the same occasion, one of its earliest and ablest advocates.

And these were the acts of a man more than threescore-and-ten years old, wearied with service and racked with disease, and praying to be suffered to return home and recover his strength, before he should go hence and be no more seen,—but whose retirement Congress was unwilling to allow! In his early youth, however, he had adopted the maxim “never to ask, never to refuse, and never to resign” any office for which others might think him fit, and he bravely persevered till all was accomplished.

May I not safely say, Fellow-Citizens, that had Benjamin Franklin left no record of his public service, but that which contains the story of his career as a Foreign Agent and Minister, whether of separate Colonies or of the whole Country, after he had already completed the allotted term of human existence, he would still have richly merited a Statue in the Squares of his native City, and a niche in the hearts

of all her people, as one of the great American Negotiators and Diplomats of our Revolutionary age?

And now, my Friends, over and above the four distinct and separate phases of his life and history, which I have thus imperfectly delineated, but which are to find a worthier and more permanent portrayal on the four panels of the pedestal before you,—over and above them all, at once the crowning glory of his career and the keystone to its admirable unity, blending and binding together all the fragmentary services which he rendered in widely differing spheres of duty into one proportionate and noble life,—over and above them all, like some gilded and glorious dome over columns and arches and porticoes of varied but massive and magnificent architecture, rises the character of Franklin for *Benerolence*; that character which pervaded his whole existence, animating every step of its progress, and entitling him to the preeminent distinction of a true PHILANTHROPIST.

Happening, by the purest accident, let me rather say, by some Providential direction, to have read in his earliest youth an Essay written by another celebrated son of Boston, (Cotton Mather,) upon “the Good that is to be devised and designed by those who desire to answer the great end of Life,” he dedicated himself at once to “a perpetual endeavor to do good in the world.” He read in that little volume such golden sentences as these:—“It is possible that the wisdom of a poor man may start a proposal that may serve a city, save a nation.” “A mean mechanic—who can tell what an engine of good he may be, if humbly and wisely applied unto it!” “The remembrance of having been the man that first moved a good law, were better than a statue erected for one’s memory.” These and many other passages of that precious little volume sunk deep into his mind, and gave the turn to the whole current of his career. Writing to “his honored mother” at the age of forty-three, he says, “for my own part, at present, I pass my time agreeably enough. I enjoy, through mercy, a tolerable share of health. I read a great deal, ride a little, do a little business for myself, now and then for others, retire when I can, and go into company when I please; so the years roll round, and the last will come, when I would rather have it said, ‘*He lived usefully,*’ than ‘*He died rich.*’” Writing to the son of Cotton Mather, within a few years of his own death (1784), and after he had achieved a world-wide celebrity as a Philosopher, a Statesman and a Patriot, he nobly says, in reference to the “*Essays to do Good*,”—“I have always set a greater value on the character of a *Doer of Good*, than on any other kind of reputation; and if I have been, as you seem to think, a useful citizen, the public owes the advantage of it to that book.”

And certainly if any man of his age, or of almost any other age,

ever earned the reputation of a doer of good, and of having lived usefully, it was Benjamin Franklin. No life was ever more eminently and practically a useful life than his. Capable of the greatest things, he condescended to the humblest. He never sat down to make himself famous. He never secluded himself from the common walks and duties of society in order to accomplish a great reputation, much less to accumulate a great fortune. He wrote no elaborate histories, or learned treatises, or stately tomes. Short essays or tracts, thrown off at a heat to answer an immediate end,—letters to his associates in science or in politics,—letters to his family and friends,—these make up the great bulk of his literary productions; and, under the admirable editorship of Mr. SPARKS, nine noble volumes do they fill,—abounding in evidences of a wisdom, sagacity, ingenuity, diligence, freshness of thought, fullness of information, comprehensiveness of reach, and devotedness of purpose, such as are rarely to be found associated in any single man. Wherever he found anything to be done, he did it; anything to be investigated, he investigated it; anything to be invented or discovered, he forthwith tried to invent or discover it, and almost always succeeded. He did everything as if his whole attention in life had been given to that one thing. And thus while he did enough in literature to be classed among the great Writers of his day; enough in invention and science to secure him the reputation of a great Philosopher; enough in domestic politics to win the title of a great Statesman; enough in foreign negotiations to merit the designation of a great Diplomatist; he found time to do enough, also, in works of general utility, humanity and benevolence, to insure him a perpetual memory as a great Philanthropist.

No form of personal suffering or social evil escaped his attention, or appealed in vain for such relief or remedy as his prudence could suggest or his purse supply. From that day of his early youth, when, a wanderer from his home and friends in a strange place, he was seen sharing his rolls with a poor woman and child,—to the last act of his public life, when he signed that well known Memorial to Congress, as President of the Anti-Slavery Society of Pennsylvania, a spirit of earnest and practical benevolence runs like a golden thread along his whole career. Would to Heaven that he could have looked earlier at that great evil which he looked at last, and that the practical resources and marvelous sagacity of his mighty intellect could have been brought seasonably to bear upon the solution of a problem, now almost too intricate for any human faculties! Would to Heaven that he could have tasked his invention for a mode of drawing the fires safely from that portentous cloud,—in his day, indeed, hardly bigger than a man's hand,—but which is now blackening the whole sky, and threatening to rend asunder that noble fabric of Union, of which he himself proposed the earliest model!

To his native place, which is now about to honor him afresh, Franklin never failed to manifest the warmest regard and affection. Never forgetting that "he owed his first instructions in literature to the free grammar schools established there," he made a provision by his Will which will render him a sort of Patron Saint to Boston school-boys to the latest generation. Never forgetting the difficulties under which he had struggled, as a Boston apprentice, he has left ample testimony of his desire to relieve Boston apprentices from similar trials in all time to come. At all periods of his life, he evinced the liveliest interest in the welfare of his birth-place, and the kindest feelings to its citizens, and the day is certain to arrive, though we of this generation may not live to see it, when his native city and his native state may owe some of their noblest improvements and most magnificent public works to a fund which he established with that ultimate design. Here, in yonder Granary grave-yard, his father and mother were buried, and here he 'placed a stone, in filial regard to their memory,' with an inscription commemorative of their goodness. The kindness and honors of other cities could not altogether wean him from such associations. As he approached the close of his long and eventful career, his heart seemed to turn with a fresh yearning to the grave of his parents, the scenes of his childhood, and the friends of his early years. Writing to Dr. Cooper, on the 15th May, 1781, he says, "I often form pleasing imaginations of the pleasure I should enjoy as a private person among my friends and compatriots in my native Boston. God only knows whether this pleasure is reserved for me." Writing to his sister on the 4th November, 1787, he says, "It was my intention to decline serving another year as President, that I might be at liberty to take a trip to Boston in the spring; but I submit to the unanimous voice of my country, which has again placed me in the chair." Writing to the Rev. Dr. Lathrop, on the 31st of May, 1788, he says, "It would certainly, as you observe, be a very great pleasure to me, if I could once again visit my native town, and walk over the grounds I used to frequent when a boy, and when I enjoyed many of the innocent pleasures of youth, which would so be brought to my remembrance, and where I might find some of my old acquaintances to converse with. \* \* But I enjoy the company and conversation of any of its inhabitants, when any of them are so good as to visit me: for, besides their general good sense, which I value, the Boston manner, turn of phrase, and even tone of voice and accent in pronunciation, all please, and seem to refresh and revive me." But the most striking testimony of his attachment to the scenes of his birth is found in the letter to Dr. Samuel Mather, on the 12th May, 1784, from which I have already quoted, where he says, "I long much to see again my native place, and to lay my bones there. I left it in 1723; I visited it in 1733, 1743, 1753, and 1763. In 1773, I was in England; in 1775



I had a sight of it, but could not enter, it being in possession of the enemy. I did hope to have been there in 1783, but could not obtain my dismissal from this employment here; and now I fear I shall never have that happiness."

And he never did again enjoy that happiness. A few years more of pain and suffering, sustained with an undaunted courage, and relieved by a persevering and unwearied attention to every private and every public claim,—a few years more of pain and suffering terminated his career, and the 17th day of April, 1790, found him resting at last from the labors of a life of eighty-four years and three months, in the city of his adoption, where his ashes still repose. Let his memory ever be a bond of affection between his birth-place and his burial-place, both of which he loved so well, and of both of which he was so eminent a Benefactor; and may their only rivalry or emulation be, which shall show itself, in all time to come, by acts of enlightened philanthropy and of enlarged and comprehensive patriotism, most loyal to the memory, and most faithful to the example and the precept, of one who did enough to reflect imperishable glory on a hundred Cities!

Fellow-Citizens of Boston, the third half century has just expired, since this remarkable person first appeared within our limits. The 17th day of January last completed the full term of one hundred and fifty years, since, having drawn his first breath beneath the humble roof which not a few of those around me can still remember, he was borne to the neighboring sanctuary to receive the baptismal blessing at the hands of the pious Pemberton, or, it may have been, of the venerable Willard. More than sixty-six years have elapsed since his death.

He has not,—I need not say he has not,—been unremembered or unhonored during this long interval. The Street which bears his name, —with the graceful Urn in its centre, and the old Subscription Library at its side,—was a worthy tribute to his memory for the day in which it was laid out. The massive stone which has replaced the crumbling tablet over the grave of his father and mother, is a memorial which he himself would have valued more than anything which could have been done for his own commemoration. The numerous Libraries, Lyceums, Institutes and Societies of every sort, which have adopted his name as their most cherished designation, are witnesses to his worth, whose testimony would have been peculiarly prized by him. Nor should it be forgotten, on this occasion, that within a year or two past, a beautiful Shaft of polished granite, with a brief but most appropriate and comprehensive inscription, has found a conspicuous place at Mount Auburn, erected, as a tribute of regard and reverence for Franklin's memory, by a self-made man of kindred spirit, still living in our vicinity,—the venerable Thomas Dowse,—whose magnificent Library is destined to enrich the Historical Hall at our side.

But something more was demanded by the unanimous sentiment

of his birth-place. Something more was called for by the general voice of his country. Something more was due to the claims of historic justice. The deliberate opinion of the world has now been formed upon him. Personal partialities and personal prejudices, which so often make or mar a recent reputation or a living fame, have long ago passed away, with all who cherished them. The great Posthumous Tribunal of two whole generations of men,—less fallible than that to which Antiquity appealed,—has sat in solemn judgment upon his character and career. The calm, dispassionate Muse of History,—not overlooking errors which he himself was ever earliest in regretting, nor ascribing to him any fabulous exemption from frailties and infirmities which he was never backward in acknowledging,—has pronounced her unequivocal and irrevocable award; not only assigning him no second place among the greatest and worthiest who have adorned the annals of New England, but enrolling him forever among the illustrious Benefactors of mankind! And we are here this day, to accept, confirm and ratify that award, for ourselves and our posterity, by a substantial and enduring Token, which shall no longer be withheld from your view! Let it be unveiled! Let the Stars and Stripes no longer conceal the form of one who was always faithful to his country's Flag, and who did so much to promote the glorious cause in which it was first unfurled!

And now behold him, by the magic power of native genius, once more restored to our sight! Behold him, in the enjoyment of his cherished wish,—“revisiting his native town and the grounds he used to frequent when a boy”! Behold him, re-appearing on the old school-house Green, which was the play-place of his early days,—henceforth to fulfill, in some degree, to the eye of every passer-by, the charming vision of the Fairy Queen—

“A spacious court they see,  
Both plain and pleasant to be walked in,  
Where them does meet a FRANKLIN fair and free.”

Behold him, with the fur collar and linings which were the habitual badge of the master printers of the olden times, and which many an ancient portrait exhibits as the chosen decorations of not a few of the old philosophers, too,—Galileo, Copernicus and Kepler,—who held, like him, familiar commerce with the skies! Behold him, with the scalloped pockets and looped buttons and long Quaker-like vest and breeches, in which he stood arraigned and reviled before the Council of one Monarch, and in which he proudly signed the Treaty of Alliance with another! Behold him, with the “fine crab-tree walking-stick” which he bequeathed to “his friend and the friend of mankind General Washington,”—saying so justly, that “if it were a sceptre, he has merited it, and would become it”!

Behold the man, to whom Washington himself wrote, for the consolation of his declining strength,—a consolation more precious than all the compliments and distinctions which were ever showered upon him by philosophers or princes,—“If to be venerated for benevolence, if to be admired for talents, if to be esteemed for patriotism, if to be beloved for philanthropy, can gratify the human mind, you must have the pleasing consolation to know that you have not lived in vain. And I flatter myself that it will not be ranked among the least grateful occurrences of your life to be assured, that so long as I retain my memory, you will be recollected with respect, veneration and affection by your sincere friend, GEORGE WASHINGTON!”

Other honors may grow cheap, other laurels may fade and wither, other eulogiums may be forgotten, the solid bronze before us may moulder and crumble, but the man of whom it may be said that he enjoyed the sincere friendship, and secured the respect, veneration and affection of *Washington*, has won a title to the world's remembrance which the lapse of ages will only strengthen and brighten.

Behold him, “the Sage of antiquity coming back to give austere lessons and generous examples to the moderns,”—the wise old man of his own Apologue of 1757, discoursing to the multitude of frugality and industry, of temperance and toleration!—Behold Poor Richard,—pointing the way to wealth and dealing out his proverbs of wit and wisdom,—that wisdom which “crieth at the gates” and “standeth by the way in the places of the paths,”—that wisdom “which dwells with prudence, and finds out knowledge of witty inventions”! Behold him, with that calm, mild, benevolent countenance, never clouded by anger or wrinkled by ill humor, but which beamed ever, as at this instant, with a love for his fellow-beings and “a perpetual desire to be a doer of good” to them all.

Behold him, Children of the Schools, boys and girls of Boston, bending to bestow the reward of merit upon each one of you that shall strive to improve the inestimable advantages of our noble Free Schools! Behold him, Mechanics and Mechanics' Apprentices, holding out to you an example of diligence, economy and virtue, and personifying the triumphant success which may await those who follow it! Behold him, ye that are humblest and poorest in present condition or in future prospect,—lift up your heads and look at the image of a man who rose from nothing, who owed nothing to parentage or patronage, who enjoyed no advantages of early education which are not open,—a hundred fold open,—to yourselves, who performed the most menial offices in the business in which his early life was employed, but who lived to stand before Kings, and died to leave a name which the world will never forget. Lift up your heads and your hearts with them, and learn a lesson of

confidence and courage which shall never again suffer you to despair—not merely of securing the means of an honest and honorable support for yourselves, but even of doing something worthy of being done for your country and for mankind! Behold him, ye that are highest and most honored in the world's regard, Judges and Senators, Governors and Presidents, and emulate each other in copying something of the firmness and fidelity, something of the patient endurance and persevering zeal and comprehensive patriotism and imperturbable kind feeling and good nature, of one who was never dizzied by elevation or debauched by flattery or soured by disappointment or daunted by opposition or corrupted by ambition, and who knew how to stand humbly and happily alike on the lowest round of obscurity and on the loftiest pinnacle of fame!

Behold him, and listen to him, one and all, Citizens, Freemen, Patriots, Friends of Liberty and of Law, Lovers of the Constitution and the Union, as he recalls the services which he gladly performed and the sacrifices which he generously made, in company with his great associates, in procuring for you those glorious institutions which you are now so richly enjoying! Listen to him, especially, as he repeats through my humble lips, and from the very autograph original which his own aged hand had prepared for the occasion,—listen to him as he pronounces those words of conciliation and true wisdom, to which he first gave utterance sixty-nine years ago this very day, in the Convention which was just finishing its labors in framing the Constitution of the United States:—

“Mr. President, I confess that I do not entirely approve this Constitution, but, Sir, I am not sure that I shall never approve it. I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. \* \* In these sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution with all its faults, if they are such. \* \* I doubt, too, whether any other Convention we can obtain, may be able to make a better Constitution. \* \* The opinions I have had of its errors I sacrifice to the public good. I have never whispered a syllable of them abroad. Within these walls they were born, and here they shall die. \* \* On the whole, Sir, I cannot help expressing a wish that every member of this Convention, who may still have objections to it, would with me on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility, and to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument.”

Upon this speech, followed by a distinct motion to that effect, Hamilton and Madison, and Rufus King and Roger Sherman, and the Morrises of Pennsylvania, and the Pinckneys of South Carolina, and the rest of that august assembly, with Washington at their head, on the 17th day of September, 1787, subscribed their names to the Con-

stitution under which we live. And Mr. Madison tells us, that whilst the last members were signing it, Dr. Franklin, looking towards the President's chair, at the back of which an image of the sun happened to be painted, observed to a few members near him, that Painters had found it difficult to distinguish in their art a rising from a setting sun. "I have (said he) often and often in the course of the session, and of the vicissitudes of my hopes and fears as to its issue, looked at that behind the President without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting. But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun."

Yes, venerated Sage, privileged to live on

'Till old experience did attain  
To something of prophetic strain,'—

yes, that was indeed a rising Sun, "coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a giant to run his course." And a glorious course he has run, enlightening and illuminating, not our own land only, but every land on the wide surface of the earth,— "and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." God, in his infinite mercy, grant that by no failure of his blessing or of our prayers, of his grace or of our gratitude, of his protection or of our patriotism, that Sun may be seen, while it has yet hardly entered on its meridian pathway, shooting madly from its sphere and hastening to go down in blackness or in blood, leaving the world in darkness and freedom in despair! And may the visible presence of the GREAT BOSTONIAN, restored once more to our sight, by something more than a fortunate coincidence, in this hour of our Country's peril, serve not merely to ornament our streets, or to commemorate his services, or even to signalize our own gratitude,—but to impress afresh, day by day, and hour by hour, upon the hearts of every man and woman and child who shall gaze upon it, a deeper sense of the value of that Liberty, that Independence, that Union and that Constitution, for all of which he was so early, so constant, and so successful a laborer!

Fellow-Citizens, the Statue which has now received your reiterated acclamations, owes its origin to the Mechanics of Boston, and especially to the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association. Or, if any fortunate word of another may be remembered as having suggested it, that word was uttered in their service, and by one who is proud to be counted among the honorary members of their fraternity. The Merchants and business men of our City, members of the learned professions, and great numbers of all classes of the community, came nobly to their aid, and in various sums, large and small, contributed to the cost of the work. Honor and thanks to them all!

But honor and thanks this day, especially, to the gifted native

Artist,—Richard S. Greenough,—who has so admirably conceived the character, and so exquisitely wrought out the design, committed to him!

Honor, too, to Mr. Ames, and the skillful Mechanics of the Foundry at Chicopee, by whom it has been so successfully and brilliantly cast! Nor let the Sanborns and Carews be forgotten, by whom the massive granite has been hewn, and the native Verd Antique so beautifully shaped and polished.

It only remains for me, Fellow-Citizens, as Chairman of the Subcommittee under whose immediate direction the Statue has been designed and executed,—a service in the discharge of which I acknowledge an especial obligation to the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Mechanic Association, and to Mr. John H. Thorndike and Mr. John Cowdin among its active members;—to those eminent mechanics, inventors and designers, Blanchard, Tufts, Smith and Hooper;—to Dr. Jacob Bigelow, President of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; to Mr. Prescott, the Historian; to Mr. Henry Greenough, the Architect,—to whom we are indebted for the design of the pedestal; to Mr. Thomas G. Appleton and Mr. Epes Sargent, cherished friends of art and of artists, one of them absent to-day, but not forgotten; to Edward Everett and Jared Sparks, whose names are so honorably and indissolubly associated with the noblest illustration of both Franklin and Washington; to David Sears, among the living, and to Abbott Lawrence, among the lamented dead, whose liberal and enlightened patronage of every good work will be always fresh in the remembrance of every true Bostonian;—it only remains for me, as the organ of a Committee thus composed and thus aided, to deliver up the finished work to my excellent friend, Mr. Frederick W. Lincoln, Jr., who, as Chairman of the General Committee,—after the Ode of Welcome, written by our Boston Printer-Poet, James T. Fields, shall have been sung by the Children of the Schools,—will designate the disposition of the Statue which has been finally agreed upon in behalf of the subscribers.

Sir, to you as President of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association, and as Chairman, *ex-officio*, of the Committee of Fifty appointed under their auspices,—yourself, I am glad at this hour to remember, a direct and worthy descendant of that patriot Mechanic of the Revolution, PAUL REVERE—I now present the work which your Association intrusted to our charge,—hoping that it may not be counted unworthy to commemorate the great forerunner and exemplar of those intelligent and patriotic Boston Mechanics, who have been for so many years past among the proudest ornaments and best defenders of our beloved City, and to whom we so confidently look, not merely to promote and build up its material interests, but to sustain and advance its moral, religious, charitable and civil institutions in all time to come!



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